

## Curbing Unemployment through African Traditional Education System Ugwu Jovita Nnenna

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### ABSTRACT

The burden of unemployment is currently taking its toll on the government of the day as more of its youth are engaged in different forms of crime and deadly agitations. The rise in Nigeria's social unrest cannot be detached from the spiralling youth unemployment. The young people who would have engaged in one meaningful job now divert their talent and skilful energy to unholy activities, thus giving rise to the call for alternative solutions to the nation's difficulties. Accordingly, traditional education which can be classified as informal system of education is a sub system of the African culture. It has its foundation laid among African families with parents saddled with the responsibility of transferring knowledge and technical knowhow to their children. African traditional education takes the form of knowledge transfer. This system of education lingers from time of old and cuts across all passages of life: toddler to childhood and adolescent to late adulthood. This paper therefore mirrors the interaction between African traditional culture and an enduring human development of the child. It further examines traditional education and its impact on individuals, families and the society at large, with special focus on its ability to curb unemployment in the African society.

**Keywords:** Unemployment, youth, and African traditional education.

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### INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is one of the greatest dilemmas of the people of Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Nigeria in particular [1,2,3,4,5]. At the moment there is no acceptable figure of the unemployed people in Nigeria as most agencies and bodies dish out conflicting figures on yearly basis thereby countering one another [6,7,8,9,10]. The reason for this clash of figure according to some analysts is the government's inability to keep proper statistics of its citizens and activities, death and birth as well as its graduates as [1] notes that, if the government is able to determine its annual population figure, it can make adequate plans for her citizens [11,12,13,14]. According to the 2012 National baseline Youth Survey Report issued in Abuja by the National Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Youth Development, "more than half, about 34% of youth population were unemployed" [15,16,17]. The report added that "females stood at 51.9 percent compared to their counterpart with 48.1 percent".

There are other pointers that reveal the true picture of the state of Nigeria's unemployment level. One of such is the Nigeria Immigration recruitment Exercise of 2014 which ended on a

disastrous note [18,19,20]. It recorded many deaths and casualties because out of the advertised vacancy for 5000 personnel, over 75,000 people applied for the positions across the country. Ezeji [2] confirms this when he says that "while there are less than 5000 vacant positions in the NIS, about 60,000 applicants submitted their applications, with the payment of one thousand naira, as application fee per applicant". Isine [3] explains that "close to 70,000 applicants turned up for the examination in Abuja centre alone, and Port Harcourt 25,000". The Nigeria Police service commission on the first of April 2016 unveiled a portal for the recruitment exercise of 10,000 policemen as approved by President Muhammadu Buhari. In less than two weeks after its announcement, [4] quoted the Police Service Commission Chairman Mike Okiro to have announced that "over 550,000 candidates have applied for recruitment into the Nigeria Police Force" that has only 10,000 spaces to be filled. This astronomical number of applicants that are jostling to be recruited into the Police force is enough evidence of the high level of unemployed youths in Nigeria [17,18,19,20,21].

Thus, in a typical African society, an able bodied individual who wanders about with no means of livelihood is seen as a loafer and a disgrace to his family and community. So unemployment is alien and detested among the Igbo people. This is because African traditional education in its vastness prepares the totality of man. Okoro [5] in view of this, sees western education in a different direction. Africans noted for enterprising spirit and personal industry have been reduced to mere job seekers, instead of job creators which they were before the imperial period. This situation has left the African society in a state of social disequilibrium, which has resulted in restiveness and crisis at every sector of the socio political and economic life of African society" [18,19,20,21,22,23].

The burden of unemployment is currently taking its toll on the government of the day as more of its youth are engaged in different forms of crime and deadly agitations. The rise in Nigeria's social unrest cannot be detached from the spiralling youth unemployment. The young people who would have engaged in one meaningful job now divert their talent and skilful energy to unholy activities thereby giving credence to the saying that "an idle mind is a devils workshop". Udemba [6] further laments that Nigerian schools are in competition with each other over who will churn out more graduates without sparing a thought on

#### **AFRICAN TRADITIONAL EDUCATION**

African traditional education which is indigenous grown education system manifests throughout the Child's day to day activity with the parents and other adults within the family enclave and beyond as key players. It is all encompassing, engaging every aspect of man power devoid of time waste, and every member is a functional part of the family. African traditional education focuses on every member of the family and brings them closer to their values and norms as enshrined in the people's cultural way of living. It instils in them the knowledge that can make them to be useful to themselves, their families and the society at large as well as the gods and the Supreme Being. Each African community has its peculiarity in developing its people as it has much to

how to develop an academic curriculum that will equip graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills. The white collar jobs which these graduates have been psychologically positioned and designed by the 'whiteman's education' to fit into are absent. The colonial system of education designed their learning system to suit their system of government by making provision that will fill vacancy in their administrative offices no doubt has fast began to lose relevance. This prompts [7] to conclude that; "Nigerian education system is bookish and academic oriented and lacked vocational and entrepreneurial value". No wonder the federal and state governments cry over the need to include skill and technical education in the name of entrepreneurship. This is a pointer to the failure of the nation's current education system. Thus, [8] points out; "one of the impacts of the colonialism in Africa was the imposition of alien culture, which eventually pervades the various sectors' of Africa's development such as political, economic, and cultural through the medium of language and western education". The Whiteman's education brought to the Africans the culture of dependence, corruption, waste, restiveness and redundancy. It's now imperative to embrace Igbo traditional education which revolves in skill acquisition and technical training [20,21,22,23].

do with its environment and endowment [20,21,22,23,24].

African traditional education is regarded as informal education by the westerners due to the absence of classroom and teachers, but its structure has parents and elders as instructors while the children are the learners. The teaching is a process transmitted through different ways, avenues and at various stages of life over a long period of time. Okoro [9] explains that "the African Traditional education curriculum, though not documented, was quite elaborate, embracing all aspects of human development. African traditional education could be classified into 3 stages: formative years (childhood), Adolescent and Early Adulthood. The formative (childhood) stage which covers from zero -6 years, the Childs

education basically lies with the mother and other younger family members that will aid in nursing the child. During breastfeeding the bond is established as the child always maintains eye contact with the mother, learning facial expression and her state of mind. Within this stage (childhood), the child exhibits certain traits of intimacy with the mother and tries to wriggle itself out to be with her especially if she has been away from home knowing that food is for sure. From age 2-4 years, the child is already armed with how to do some minor house chore learnt from the elderly ones like going on errand to call someone, helps out in bringing certain objects like broom and cup. This is the first exam the mother gives to test the Child's ability to recognise objects which is equivalent to the modern day Nursery school. This lingers up to 6 years when the child graduates to serves as tape recorder of the family and second eye of the parents both solicited and unsolicited ones [21,22,23].

During Adolescent stage, the child is practically exposed and engaged in the daily routine of the family in form of morals, recreational, agriculture, cooking, vocational & physical training. At this stage, peer group and gender plays crucial role as the males are restricted to certain roles like climbing trees and other onerous works tradition forbids women from doing. The females' on the other hand focus on domestic work like cooking, keeping the house clean and taking care of their younger ones in the absence of the mother. Taking the goats out early in the morning, getting fodder for the livestock and fetching water can be jointly done by both sexes. Every one works according to his or her pace but there is always room for competition while outstanding ones are commended and rewarded. The compliment brings competitiveness and ignites hard working spirit as most of their activities are done in company of same peer group and age mates. Attaining adulthood stage is suggestive of full maturity in African traditional education and every adult can at that stage embark on those skills and knowledge he/she acquired without supervision of the parents. Having started from the formative/adolescent years to receive guidance on things that will shapen his

life, the child is assumed to be expert and perfect in them. At this stage the child is already looked upon to carve a niche for himself, have a family of his own, and fend for them just as his parents did. Throughout the Child's lifetime, he lives to reduplicate all the events that played out when he was under the tutelage of the parents. From early morning ritual of communication with the gods for the men, providing for the family, protecting his family and disciplining. The female automatically assume the place of mother and exhibits all those traits she learnt from the mother like child making, cooking and feeding the family amongst others.

African traditional education is all encompassing as it captures all fields of the western education curriculum even beyond and every African child is exposed to them. Okeke [10] quoting Fafunwa, captures the seven cardinal principles of traditional African education. These deal with the physical, moral, character, intellectual and vocational relationships and cultural training". These are elaborated below:

#### **Physical Fitness**

African traditional education in its stead has physical training that makes Africans withstand external attacks and their perceived enemies. They come in the form of fun and practised during recreation periods while the exhibitions takes place during the communities' festival when each village is made to participate in the contest. The physical training which starts from the Child's formative years builds up over a lifetime such as climbing of trees, carrying loads, trekking long distant roads trying to go to the farm. The climbing of trees to pluck fruits, fetching fire wood, climbing hills to fetch water and other energy sapping jobs that are features of a typical African family activity are part of physical training including hunting. In fact, physical training starts immediately after birth during the post natal period. Grandmothers never fail to twist, throw up and fling the neonate during bathe. This is followed by special songs to make the child feel at ease. All these are accumulated exercise and experiences that built their bones as every child discovers his limb so early and use it whenever time calls. Under traditional education, wrestling forms part of these physical exercises. It is one

of the traditional sports that show one's strength and tact over others as it separates the strong from the weak.

#### **Morality**

Moral education in African tradition stipulates standard behaviour expected of all and sundry, be it man or woman, young and old. It focuses on what is right and wrong and dos and don'ts to ones fellow man and the society. Virtually all the moral codes are passed on to the child through folktales mostly to drive home the ideal way of living. These teachings mostly come from the mother who is always in the house with the children, while the father is away searching for daily bread. It is a must for every child to respect the elders, give them priority and never fails to assist them when they are in need.

#### **Logical Ability**

African traditional education is filled with attributes that develop the Child's intellect; it comes in form of sports, games and plays. Proverbs, riddles and jokes, tongue twisters, are the many games that constitute African traditional education which sharpens the African child's intellect. The intellectual aspect of the traditional education is extracurricular activities used for relaxation and to ward off stress and anxiety. Tongue twister is used to drill ones speed to meet up the required target of time; hence, African traditional education exposes children to all these for the enrichment of their intellect.

#### **Vocational Training**

Vocational training under traditional education is more of job oriented with many branches depending on the community and their natural resources. The vastness of vocations in the African society makes it difficult for unemployment to thrive. African vocational education could be classified into four areas; Agro-farming, Trades, Crafts and of course Professionals.

Consequently, Agro-farming covers agricultural based businesses such as farming in its totality, animal husbandry and fishing. With agro business, it is rare for parents to purchase food for their families because virtually everything needed is within the compound. African family vegetable garden has in its stock green vegetables, okra, melon, pepper and other leafy vegetables for the sustenance of the family immediate needs in place of the

distance farm. The child is trained on how to collect fodder for goat and sheep, opening the tiny door for the exit of poultry in the morning and closing it in the evening when they must have come to rest. Those sheep that are to be taken out will be handled by the child and tied in a bush for its feeding; the child in the same way is responsible for bringing it back home at sundown. An elder or any of the relations in most cases gives the child either poultry or goat (joint ownership); this is the beginning of the Child's ownership of livestock, he guards it jealously. For them, doing all this is fun but at last it's a lifelong training/experience that exposed and prepared them for their lifetime occupation.

#### **Trades**

Trade has its place in the traditional education. African communities engage in inter-trade between one another in exchange of those commodities that are lacking in their area especially solid minerals like salt, earthen pot (clay sand) and other sundry commodities. Even some agricultural products are sourced from neighbouring communities.

#### **Crafts**

Crafts entail clothe weaving, dress making, cosmetology, carpentry, blacksmith, brick laying, carving, hair dressing, mat and basket making, wine tapping, painting and hair plating. In fact all these trade that fall within artisanship are undertaken by people from various African communities. Families that are not gifted in any of these trades but want to acquire the knowledge enlist through apprenticeship training. After training, the learner will become mastery of the trade and can practice on his own. This is in line with [8] assertions "at the pre-colonial times, traditional education was based on the vocations of parents. These vocations such as carpentry, blacksmith, traditional medicine, brick laying and so on were professions handed down to children by way of training".

#### **Professionals**

Professionals in the African traditional education cover services rendered in different disciplines. They are traditional experts in their chosen career, which in most cases run in the family lineage. It could be bestowed on

someone through collective decision but such a person must meet certain standards. These professionals include; doctors, chief priests, bankers and administrators. People in dire need of their Services are usually directed to them as they are all well known among their people. Each professional doctor usually has his major field unlike the present doctors that cure virtually all ailments. Among Africans, if you are having stomach ache you will be directed to a particular doctor that cures it, same goes to a person bitten by snake. No traditional doctor handles all ailment rather he will direct you to the person doing it. One striking aspect of traditional health professionals is that their services are segmented in such a manner that a particular professional is

#### CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

It is essential for government to restructure the countries education system to reflect the needs of this time. The curricular of higher education should be reviewed with emphasis on skill acquisition in place of the present

charged with diagnosis while the other takes charge of administering drugs. Thus, a sick person will first go to a diviner who through divination detects the cause of the sickness. The lab result from the diviner serves as a guide for the particular doctor that will handle the case. There are also African professional bone setters who use herbs and roots to repair broken and shattered bones.

At the administrative levels, cabinet chiefs make up the body of administrators. Other organs of administration include village chiefs, leaders of the various Age grades, market masters and daughters of the community etc. All these are administrative organs in African societies.

certificate acquisition. The African education system which is known to have perfected apprenticeship technique over time can be incorporated into the mainstream education system.

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